

Your communities

Artist exhibits her independence

By Robert Knox
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

A successful painter with her colorful oils shown in galleries on Nantucket, the Cape, and the South Shore, Duxbury artist Bettina Lesieur decided to take charge of the showing process.

Some 13 years ago, she visited an art exhibit spread through the rooms of an historic house. "I looked around," she said. "I thought to myself, I can do this."

The next year she put a collection of work together, took the furniture out of her small Cape-style home, spread the word through her mailing list, and held a private reception and showing.

Every August since then, Lesieur has opened her Duxbury studio to the public to see a year's worth of paintings in the setting in which they were created. Her husband, a professional builder, built a barn behind their house for a studio gallery a decade ago, and Lesieur expanded her showing to a pair of three-day weekend exhibitions.

The daughter of accomplished artists Robert and Maria Lesieur, the painter has received numerous accolades, including the prestigious Grumbacher Art Award, which recognizes outstanding oil painters. She paints still lifes; landscapes from her travels to the Southwest, Europe (through countryside made famous by the works of old masters), and the Caribbean; and scenes familiar to her South Shore neighbors. This year's show includes more than 70 works.

While her parents were "plein-air" (outdoors painters), Lesieur says she paints in her studio because the "light changes so fast." But she does her research first.

"Learning and observing" outdoors, she watches the sky and the color shifts in the landscape from the changing light. She takes photos, using them for composition purposes and light and shadow.

The artistry comes from inside. "I have an idea," she said, and "it takes on a life of its own." She finds herself creating a picture "not



Artist Bettina Lesieur (top) controls her art showings by exhibiting them at her home studio (above) in Duxbury. An example of her artistry is "Sunset Over the Marshes."



BEHIND THE SCENES

Open studio and gallery exhibition

Lesieur Gallery
301 St. George St., Duxbury
Reception: July 31, 6 to 10 p.m.
Exhibit: Aug. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.,
or by appointment. Free
781-934-5103
www.bettinalesieur.com

intended — but, wow."

Lesieur paints in oil on wood panels, rather than canvas, because, she says, each layer of paint dries faster on that surface. She works in different sizes, from miniatures 3 by 4 inches to murals. The freedom of working for herself, rather than for a market perceived by a gallery means "I get to paint what I want," she said. "I'm very independent and self-sufficient."

Her show includes a "signature piece," reproduced on the announcement postcard and sold at auction with 10 percent of the proceeds donated to charity. The charity this year is NEADS (Dogs for Deaf and Disabled Americans), which trains dogs to help the deaf and disabled live independently. The silent auction for the piece will conclude on the last day of the exhibit, Aug. 9.

This year's exhibition will also honor the legacy of Lesieur's parents. Not only did the painter learn from their discipline and creativity, she also picked up their passion for gardening.

Resembling an English garden, Lesieur's Duxbury garden is put together with a "painter's instinct," as a recent local magazine piece put it. A stone wall curves like a gentle stream through the enclosed green space, supporting a hillside of perennials. Her standout summer specimen, a stewartia ornamental tree, gleams with white blossoms against dark, peeling bark. White daylilies should add to the garden's glow in the show's twilight reception tomorrow evening.

"It has a flair," Lesieur said of her garden. "It takes on a life of its own. Your garden is like a palette; it's a tapestry of different textures."

Putting on the exhibit, organizing the reception — arranging the food, the music, the publicity — is a lot of work. "It's a huge undertaking," she said. "That's why galleries get a percentage."

"But I like doing it myself," she added. "It's a labor of love. It's also my work."

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